

TREETopics



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K-9 to Blaze New Trails for AFC

By Elishia Ballentine, Editor

Meet the newest member of the AFC Law Enforcement Section: Blaze is his name, Arson is his game! In an effort to reduce the high number of arson cases in the state, the Alabama Forestry Commission recently purchased the bloodhound puppy to track down offenders.

During the past four years, an average of over 42% of all wildfires in Alabama have been determined to be “incendiary” in nature, not only destroying natural resources, wildlife, and property, but also endangering human life. According to statistics, most arsonists set fires within two miles of their homes. Working with his handler, the new “K-9 officer” will be specifically trained for woods arson investigations.

Another important task for Blaze at the AFC will be his use as a wildfire prevention message and educational tool. Making special appearances in schools and camps, he can help teach children about the dangers of wildfire, much like Smoky Bear.

All monies connected to the purchase, food, veterinary care, and training of the dog were donated by four contributors: the Tuscaloosa County Fire Protection Association, District Three Volunteer Fire Fighters’ Association, the Poarch Band of Creek Indians, and the Alabama Conservation Enforcement Officers’ Association. State Forester Linda Casey said, “For the safety and well-being of landowners and residents of the state, it is often necessary to employ alternate methods in identifying, locating, and successfully prosecuting arsonists. We’re very proud of the partnership we’ve formed with these organizations – all of which realize the high rate of woods arson in this state is unacceptable. We believe the implementation of a bloodhound program will not only prove to be a great deterrent, but also increase our effectiveness in finding woods arsonists. We’ve got high expectations of our new pup.”

Law Enforcement Chief Craig Hill noted that bloodhounds have been used in Virginia and West Virginia for a number of years to help arson investigators identify arson suspects and locate evidence. Since using a dog, West Virginia has seen a reduction in the number of woods arson-related fires. “Last year when devastating wildfires raged across the state of Georgia, these canine officers were instrumental in successfully solving several fires started by arsonists. Four arrests were the direct result of the efforts of these dogs. The deterrent effect realized from the use of the bloodhounds proved very important because once their use was publicized, the fires stopped.”



“Blaze” Trivia

- ❖ *Birthdate: July 7, 2008*
- ❖ *Born in Darlington, South Carolina*
- ❖ *Pop’s name: Elvis of Roblyn’s Neck*
- ❖ *Mom’s name: Southern Bell Magnolia*
- ❖ *Moved to Alabama at the age of 12 weeks*

DEPARTMENTS

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Blaze and Donnie will begin training together at the National Police Bloodhound Association’s winter event in South Carolina in December. He is expected to be trained and on the ground working within six to eight months. The bloodhound will also be available to assist in locating lost or missing persons – whether young, old, or dementia-related.

Already keeping busy, Blaze recently made his film debut . . . He was featured in a television ad that was sponsored by the Poarch Band of Creek Indians and is set to air statewide in February.

Spread the word . . . the Commission welcomes continued support and assistance in the ongoing upkeep of Deputy Dog Blaze 🍂

TREES AND TRUSTS

By Kim G. Nix

Reprinted with permission from *Auburn Forestry & Wildlife Sciences*, Fall 2008

The last name Heath has become a common one around the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences at Auburn University. When Don Heath and his identical twin brother Jim chose Auburn to pursue forestry degrees, they were following in their older brother Joe's footsteps. Two nephews also chose the same university and major. "There's been a forester at Auburn University School of Forestry by the name of Heath for a long time," he jokes.

Starting Out

Like many who enter forestry school, Heath loved nature and pictured himself in a job where he spent the majority of his time outside. His first job – procuring timber for Williamson Lumber Company in Ashland, Alabama – was pretty much what he envisioned. This initial employment after college became the training ground for Heath's career as a forester. "I learned more in four years there than I could have learned in 20 years in college," he said about that first job.

In addition to buying logs for the sawmill, he gained valuable experience building roads. To purchase timber from the nearby Talladega National Forest, the U.S.D.A. Forest Service required that the lumber company build roads for the logging trucks. "That's one of the first things I did after graduating from college, was to build a 23-mile road in the middle of the Talladega National Forest," he said. Today, the roads Heath helped build are used for access and recreation by the National Forest's many visitors.

After several years in Ashland, another job opportunity became available, and Heath moved to Jackson, Alabama. He went to work for M.W. Smith Lumber Company, another family-owned sawmill. When the sawmill was sold, he became employed by Container Corporation, serving in several managerial capacities. "I spent most of my career with Container, which then became Jefferson Smurfit." The majority of his 16 years with the company were spent in Brewton, Alabama procuring wood for the company, which is now called Smurfit-Stone.

While Heath was happy in his procurement job in Brewton, an opportunity to interview with AmSouth Bank presented itself in 1995. As a favor to a friend, he interviewed for the position, never thinking he would actually accept the job. "I got intrigued with the opportunity, and after a lot of soul searching and praying and thinking about it, I made an abrupt change in careers. It was a 90-degree turn."





Managing Trusts

Instead of managing trees, Heath now manages people and trusts. “I’m still managing assets—natural resource and real estate assets—primarily trust assets.”

So, how did a paper company forester make the transition to trust manager? According to Heath, it actually wasn’t that difficult. “If you sit back and look at it, managing assets for a paper company or a sawmill or an individual is not a whole lot different from managing assets for a bank.” Heath says what the bank does is generally what every landowner strives to do—manage assets on a sustained yield basis. There was some initial training, however. Like others in the same line of work, Heath went to trust school for three years to learn the intricacies of the business.

Although the bank’s name has changed from AmSouth to Regions, Heath’s job is still the same. The group manages trusts for universities, families, groups of people, foundations, individuals and others. “We are charged by law to manage them for the benefit of some other entity. Most trusts have a definitive term. They last for some definitive time and we distribute the assets to the beneficiaries.” To make things even more complicated, “There’s about as many different kinds of trusts as there are trusts.”

Heath says the legalities and duties associated with managing trusts can be involved, but at the core are fairly basic. Nevertheless, “This is a side of the world that most people don’t even know exists,” he said.

As one might guess, the nature of managing trusts entails a great deal of privacy, and all details regarding a management decision are not always revealed. In his previous career in the forest industry, Heath dealt with people who are doing his job today. “I often wondered why in the world they did some of the things they did, but now I understand,” he said. “We’re dealing with people’s lives. Everything is confidential.”

People who use irrevocable trusts often do so to postpone taxes, but Heath says, “You have to give up something to get that tax break, and what you’re giving up is control of the assets.”

One aspect of managing assets in a fiduciary capacity is that the statute of limitations never runs out. This means the trustee is subject to being sued. “We’re bound by what is known as the ‘Prudent Man Rule,’” Heath explains. This rule directs the fiduciary to invest trust assets as a “prudent man” would invest his own property, and Heath says the long-standing directive is taken seriously by managers. “You can bet that when we do something, we’re going to make a prudent decision.”

The assets Heath’s department manages are much broader than timber and include many different natural resources. “We manage timberland, farmland, all kinds of hard and soft minerals—if you can extract it from the earth, we manage it—and all kinds of real estate.” Heath not only supervises foresters, but geologists, real estate professionals, farm managers and the accompanying support staffs in all 16 states where Regions operates. Assets are managed by Regions Morgan Keegan Trust in 39 different states.

In addition to trusts, Heath manages a timber investment program for Regions. “We pool dollars from investors and go out and buy blocks of timberland and manage them for return on investment. Probably half of the investments that we manage today are non-trust assets. We offer our services like a consultant. We do the same thing for all the asset classes, not just timber.”

Giving Back

Heath credits his successful career to several things. “I worked for three or four guys who were really good mentors. I’ve been fortunate that I’ve had good bosses ever since I got out of school.” Heath says the best bosses are those who gave him a little direction and a lot of freedom. With that freedom came the ability to make some mistakes and learn from them. Something he also learned is that you can work hard, but you need to also have fun at the same time. It’s this kind of management style that Heath tries to bring to his supervisory job today. He also makes a point to meet asset managers in the field periodically so that he’s in touch with his roots.

Heath received a partial academic scholarship that allowed him to finish college and remembers how much help it was at the time. “Frankly, if it hadn’t been for that, I probably wouldn’t have finished forestry school,” he said. “For that, I owe Auburn something, and I’m just trying to pay a little of it back.”

The way he’s paid Auburn back is through supporting Auburn’s School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences by serving on both the Advisory Board and the Development Team. The Advisory Board brings together foresters from many different disciplines to advise the dean. As part of the Development Team, Heath helped raise funds for the new School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences building. He is proud to have served in that capacity since the majority of the building’s funds came from outside the University and involved the efforts of many supporters.

“I’ve been blessed my entire life, but really so in my working life. I owe a lot of that to Auburn University. They gave me the foundation so that I could go out and learn.” *(continued on page 4)*

Heath is the most recent recipient of the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences' Outstanding Alumnus Award, which was presented to him by Dean Richard Brinker and Alumni President David Carroll.

Dean Brinker is highly complimentary of Heath's dedication to forestry and the School. "Don Heath has been a truly exemplary alumnus of the School. He has achieved a high level of responsibility and success as a professional forester, and he has given back to the profession and the School. His dedication to the School as the past Chairman of the Advisory Council and his work on the Development Team to help us achieve our campaign goals reflect his dedication to see the School continue to strive for greater success," he said.

Heath was appointed to the Alabama Forestry Commission by Governor Bob Riley in 2004. He became acquainted with Riley when he lived in Clay County, the governor's home. Both were members of the Lineville Jaycees.

The Alabama Forestry Commission consists of seven members who serve staggering terms. Heath was serving as chairman of the Forestry Commission during the search for the new state forester a couple of years ago and has provided exemplary leadership to the agency. He was recently reappointed to a second term.

The Future of Forestry

As someone who is involved in the banking business during a changing national economy, what does Heath see for the future of forestry in Alabama? "I think the outlook for forestry is good—it's just different. We have different people owning assets today. The world has changed. We've become a worldwide market. We're dealing with a world economy, and we've got to be competitive worldwide, and it's forced us to be more efficient in the way we do everything. We have to get more efficient to compete in the marketplace. I'm very optimistic about the future of forestry in this state," he said. To help ensure that future, Heath was instrumental in helping Auburn University obtain a \$1 million donation from Regions Bank. While one-half will go to the College of Business, one-half will go toward an endowment for a professorship for forest products in the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences. Heath has an interest in the School of Forestry being more proactive in developing new markets and uses for wood.

"We can grow a lot more per acre per year today than when I first got into the business, but we haven't come up with many new high-value products, and that's what I'm interested in. Fuel is great and pulpwood is great, but they are low-value products.

"There are some high-value products that Southern wood is perfect for—sawtimber, plywood and poles are some examples that demand a much higher price in the marketplace. I hope that Auburn can help us come up with new, innovative products that capitalize on those characteristics of our Southern woods."

At Home in Alabama

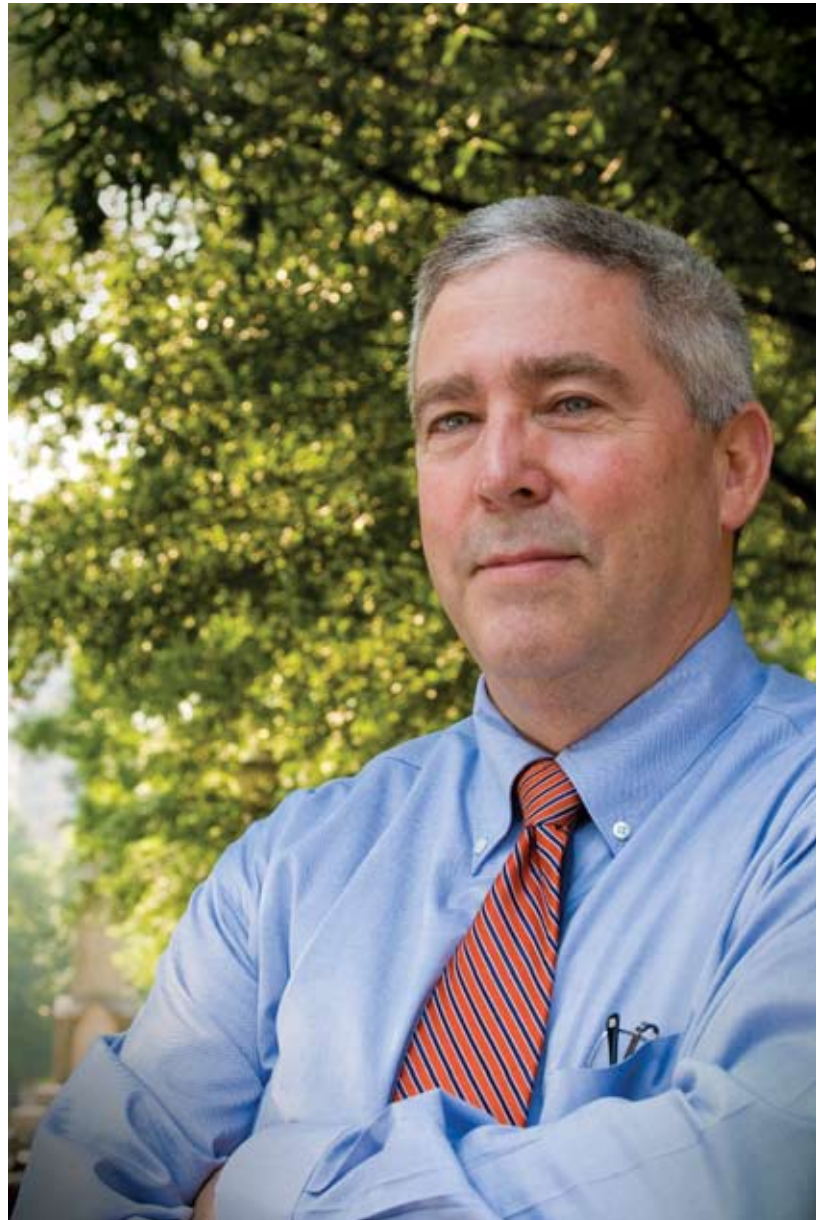
While living and working in Jackson, Ala. 28 years ago, Don met and married his wife, Yvette. The couple have three children: a son who is 33 and married with

a 1-year-old son; a 25-year-old daughter; and a 16-year-old son who is a senior in high school. Yvette is a retired special education teacher.

In Heath's spare time, he and Yvette love to scuba-dive when they can get away for vacations. His job requires traveling two to three days a week, which makes for a busy schedule. "I do make time to take a vacation. I've learned you need to totally get away from things."

He also enjoys the outdoors. "I like to hunt and fish. When I grew up, we didn't have any deer to speak of, and we didn't have any turkey. All that's changed." Once he discovered turkey hunting, he discovered his passion. "I live and breathe turkey hunting," he said. Heath hunts with his brother in south Alabama, and feels fortunate to be able to share that tradition with his children. "All of my children have had the opportunity to grow up going to the hunting camp. They absolutely love it."

With such a successful career, Heath has had more than one opportunity to move out of state, but has never felt that pull. "I think Alabama will always be my home. The diversity here is unbelievable. I love the state. I can't imagine living anywhere else." 🌿



Exceptional Slate of Speakers Headline Hardwoods Workshop

By Jim Jeter, AFC Hardwoods Specialist



On October 4, a gorgeous autumn day, 19 AFC associates attended a training session entitled, “Managing Hardwoods for Timber & Wildlife.” Held at the Goose Pond Colony in Scottsboro, Alabama, the program highlighted upland hardwood management, with an excellent compliment of speakers filling the agenda.

Topics discussed and speakers were as follows:

- Overview of Hardwoods in the Region
– Becky Barlow, Auburn University
- Successful Oak Regeneration
– Wayne Clatterbuck, University of Tennessee
- Crop Tree Management
– David Mercker, University of Tennessee
- Potions for Degraded Stands
– Wayne Clatterbuck
- Invasive Plants in Hardwoods
– Nancy Loewenstein, Auburn University
- Managing Hardwoods for Non-game Wildlife
– Patrick Cook, Alabama Cooperative Extension System
- Managing Hardwoods for Deer & Turkey
– Patrick Cook
- Practical Approaches to Achieving Objectives
– Tim Albritton, NRCS



Thanks to all who attended. Those participating showed an interest in Forest Management and Hardwood Management above and beyond the normal scope of their job, as attendance was completely voluntary for a Saturday that was way too beautiful to be indoors. Participants included State Forester Linda Casey, Assistant State Forester Bill Baisden, Bruce Bradford, Dan Green, Michael Williams, Jamey Bozeman, Trista Rogers, Lynn Washington, Joe Spradlin, Adam Ball, Dana McReynolds, Jim Jeter, Tim Washburne, Cedric Hudson, Matt Woodfin, Arthur Hitt, Lea Anna Meadows, Blake Kelly, and Michael Jones. 🌿

State Forester Linda Casey congratulates **Kelvin Daniels** for a recent award. At their annual meeting in October, the Alabama Forestry Association recognized Kelvin and the AFC for 10 years of videography and editing of the “Alabama Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year” video. 🌿



10 YEARS

Vanessa Craig, NE Region, Brownsboro
Stephen May, RCFP Division, Northport

15 YEARS

Kelvin Daniels, Executive Division, State Office
Bill DeYampert, NW Region, Perry County
Jeremiah Rodgers, EC Region, Pike County
Paul Stuckey, EC Region, Lowndes County
Scott Sweatt, NE Region, St. Clair County

20 YEARS

Madeline Hildreth, SW Region, Escambia County
Paul Hudgins, EC Region, Butler County
Tim Kyser, Forest Management, Geneva State Forest
Bobby Light, SE Region, Geneva County
John Pirtle, NW Region, Northport
Jason Wolfe, NE Region, Etowah County

25 YEARS

Charles Hall, EC Region, Dadeville
Mark Sullivan, EC Region, Chilton County

30 YEARS

Bruce Bowden, EC Region, Dale County

Assistant State Forester Bill Baisden recently presented **Debbie Johnson** with a certificate of appreciation from the State of Georgia for her service as a personal and equipment time recorder during the largest wildfire in that state's history. 🌻



Retirements



A large group of AFC associates, friends, and family gathered at Booker's Mill in Evergreen on August 28th for a retirement party honoring **James North**. A Forestry Specialist working in Conecuh County, James retired with 21 years of service at the Commission. Co-workers say he will be missed greatly. Pictured, James North (left) receiving plaque of appreciation from Southwest Regional Forester Gary Cole 🍂

A Retirement Tea was held in honor of **Betty Haynes** on September 25 at the AFC State Office in Montgomery. Betty, who retired with 15 total years of service, worked about three years with the Department of Revenue before coming to the Forestry Commission's Accounting Department, Administrative Division, as an Account Clerk in 1996. A large group of AFC co-workers and retirees were present to wish her well and give her some good-natured ribbing. Pictured: Betty Haynes receiving plaque of appreciation from Accounting Manager Roy Griffith. 🍂



Memorial

"Tuscaloosa 9 – 24 Foxtrot Charlie"

Bill Ignatz, aged 76 of Northport, died October 12. Graveside services with full military honors were held on October 14 at Sunset Memorial Park. Bill served 21 years in the U.S. Army and fought in Korea and Vietnam. He was wounded twice and highly decorated, and was named the State of Alabama Purple Heart Veteran of the Year in 2006. He was also founder and first Commander of the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla #85 of Tuscaloosa.

After retiring from the U.S. Army, Bill flew 19 years for the Alabama Forestry Commission. Before his final retirement, he was owner of the Northport Bulldog Detective Agency. Survivors include his wife, Emma Jean; three daughters; two sons; five grandchildren; and two great grandchildren.

"No Flowers, No Tears, Have a Few Beers.....OUT"



Tonia Stephens
Personnel Manager

Greetings from Personnel...

What do you get when you add a new energetic Personnel Manager to the mix of a well-seasoned Personnel Officer and a zesty Payroll Officer? I'd like to think you get a more responsive and effective Personnel Section, moving progressively to assist the leadership in meeting the overall Commission objectives.

As the newest addition to the Personnel Section, I bring with me 14 years of experience in Personnel — specifically as a Classification and Pay Analyst with the State Personnel Department. In that position, I conducted position audits, monitored position and personnel actions, and worked on behalf of over 20 state agencies to justify actions before the State Personnel Board.

Prior to my tenure there, I spent three years as a radio operator with the Finance Department in the Capitol Police Division. Experience in this capacity while working the 2nd and 3rd shifts helped to show me the importance of being flexible and engaged.

For just enough to make me dangerous, I began my college “career” at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, but finished my undergraduate studies with a Public Relations degree from Alabama State University. In 2004, I earned my Masters in Public Administration from Auburn University at Montgomery, taking classes at night.

As a proud member of the Air Force Reserve, I also bring with me over 20 years of military experience and training that has equipped me to work in fast-paced, ever-changing environments. I am currently serving as the Fuels Officer in charge of a Logistics Readiness Squadron, while simultaneously acting as Operations Officer detailed to the 25th Aerial Port Squadron.

With regard to the Forestry Commission's Personnel Section, I see my appointment as Personnel Manager a welcomed challenge. I expect nothing less than success for us as we have a wealth of knowledge and resources available at arms length – literally. Overall, it is my intent to enhance our responsiveness to you, the Forestry Commission employees – our customers – to ensure we identify, appoint, and ultimately sustain the most qualified candidates to serve the citizens of the State of Alabama. 🍂



NEWS TO KNOW

The highly anticipated 3.5% Cost of Living Increase went into effect September 1, 2008 and was reflected in our checks October 1st. In addition, the following changes have been approved by the State Personnel Board over the past few months as it applies to Forestry Commission employees:

| Board Month | Class Code | Class Title | Old Range | New Range | New Title |
|-------------|------------|------------------------------|-----------|-----------|------------------------|
| Sep-08 | 10851 | Departmental Personnel Mgr I | 76 | 7779 | N/A |
| Aug-08 | 70424 | Forest Investigator | 63 | 7275 | N/A |
| May-08 | 70705 | Biologist Aide I/II | 5460 | 5461 | Biologist Aide |
| | 70703 | Biologist Aide III | 65 | 6566 | Biologist Aide, Senior |
| | 70721 | Biologist I | 69 | 6972 | N/A |
| | 70722 | Biologist II | 74 | 7475 | N/A |

PERSONNEL

Happenings

NEW FACES

Vincent Barrios

Forest Ranger Technician
N Region, Morgan County
10/01/08

Jason Dockery

Work Unit Manager
NE Region,
WU Cullman/Blount/Etowah/St. Clair
10/16/08

Michael Downs

Forest Ranger Technician
NE Region, Cullman County
09/15/08

Justin Kinney

Forest Ranger Technician
N Region, Marshall County
09/16/09

Patrick O'Neal

Forester
NW Region, Northport
10/15/08

Freddie Smith

Forest Ranger Technician
SE Region, Bullock County
10/17/08

Gray Stephens

Forest Ranger Technician
SW Region, Mobile County
09/22/08

Roy Thornton

Forest Ranger Technician
SW Region, Washington County
10/01/08

Adam Ziegenbein

Forester, FIA
Forest Management, Etowah County
09/17/08

TRANSFERS

James Brooks

Forestry Specialist
from EC Region, Montgomery
County
to EC Region, Elmore County
09/16/08

Danny Clark

Forestry Specialist
from EC Region, Chilton County
to Law Enforcement Division, Chilton
County
09/16/08

Brigetta Giles

County Manager
from EC Region, Autauga County
to NW Region, Dallas County
10/01/08

Daniel Goggans

Forest Ranger Technician
from N Region, Winston County
to N Region, Colbert County
10/16/08

Mike Lanier

Forestry Specialist
from N Region, Colbert County
to Law Enforcement Division,
Colbert County
09/16/08

Juan Merriweather

Forestry Worker
from SE Region, Dale County
to SE Region, Barbour County
10/01/08

Donnie Parker

Forestry Specialist
from SW Region, Escambia County
to Law Enforcement Division
10/16/08

Mark Sullivan

from Forestry Program Specialist,
Protection Division, State Office
to Work Unit Manager, EC Region,
WU Chilton/Autauga
10/01/08



Jim Wade

Forestry Specialist
from SW Region, Mobile County
to Law Enforcement Division, Mobile
County
09/16/08

ADVANCEMENTS**Tim Browning**

To Work Unit Manager
NW Region, WU Pickens/Fayette/
Lamar
09/16/08

Bill Clem

To Work Unit Manager
SE Region, WU Bullock/Barbour/
Pike
09/16/08

Benji Elmore

To Work Unit Manager
SW Region, WU Clarke/Choctaw/
Marengo
09/16/08

Doug Ezzell

To Work Unit Manager
N Region, WU Limestone/Madison/
Morgan
09/16/08

Terry Ezzell

To Work Unit Manager
N Region, WU Franklin/Marion/
Winston
09/16/08

Andy Guy

To Work Unit Manager
EC Region, WU Lee/Macon/Russell
09/16/08

Paul Hudgins

To Work Unit Manager
EC Region, WU Butler/Crenshaw
09/16/08

Cedric Hudson

To Work Unit Manager
NW Region, WU Hale/Greene/
Sumter
09/16/08

Dale Hurst

To Work Unit Manager
EC Region, WU Montgomery/
Elmore/Lowndes
09/16/08

Blake Kelley

To Work Unit Manager
EC Region, WU Coosa/Chambers/
Tallapoosa
09/16/08

Brad Lang

To Work Unit Manager
NW Region, WU Tuscaloosa/Walker
09/16/08

Tom Lang

To Work Unit Manager
NW Region, WU Dallas/Bibb/Perry
09/16/08

Ken Leslie

To Work Unit Manager
SW Region, WU Mobile/Washington
09/16/08

Steve Lloyd

To Work Unit Manager
SW Region, WU Monroe/Conecuh/
Wilcox
09/16/08

Michael Older

To Work Unit Manager
SE Region, WU Covington/Coffee/
Geneva
09/16/08

Jerry Smith

To Work Unit Manager
SE Region, WU Houston/Dale/Henry
09/16/08

Patrick Waldrop

To Work Unit Manager
SW Region, WU Baldwin/Escambia
09/16/08

Lynn Washington

To Work Unit Manager
N Region, WU Jackson/DeKalb/
Marshall
09/16/08

Paul Williams

To Work Unit Manager
NE Region, WU Cleburne/Calhoun/
Cherokee
09/16/08

Charles Wise

To Work Unit Manager
NE Region, WU Randolph/Clay/
Talladega
09/16/08

RETIREMENTS**Betty Haynes**

Account Clerk
Administrative Division, State Office
10/01/08



Dekalb County is home to three new State Champion Trees. Ken Thomas, Superintendent of DeSoto State Park, and Lamar Pendergrass, Assistant Superintendent (with sign), in front of champion sweet birch in September. 🍂

Bruce Aldridge, Manager of Buck's Pocket State Park, poses with sign for the new champion eastern hophornbeam 🍂



Aleshia Hambrick, nominator, and AFC Dekalb County Manager Dan Green stand under the champion white mulberry. 🍂



North Region *(continued)*

Jackson County – TREASURE Forest Certification was awarded to Howard M. Drake of Huntsville on September 15. The presentation was made by AFC Jackson County Forest Ranger/Technician Bruce Bradford. Accompanying Mr. Drake in the photo are his brother Gary Drake (right) and longtime family friend Sam McCord (center). The Drake Family owns over 800 acres in western Jackson County, and has been involved in managing the property for timber for a number of years. Located in Paint Rock Valley, this property is a natural hardwood stand that is interspersed with loblolly pines 🌲



The **Marion County** Forestry Planning Committee sponsored Session Two of the Logger Training Workshop on September 16 at Beville State Community College in Hamilton. The evening program featured sessions providing the most current information on five areas of interest. County Engineer Mike Shaw spoke on county road issues; Billy Rye, President of Forest Management Specialist, Inc., explained the importance of logger and landowner relations; and Kevin Pugh, wildlife manager for Sam Murphy and Wolf Creek Wildlife Management Area, provided an update on wildlife management for wild turkey. Also on the agenda were Jim Jeter, Best Management Practices and Hardwood Specialist for the Alabama Forestry Commission, who covered BMPs for forestry, and Tony Avery, AFC Marion County Manager, who discussed cogongrass.

Logger training programs are provided to help logging professionals maintain certification as well as provide ongoing training in this vital aspect of the state's multi-billion dollar forestry industry. The workshop was approved for 3 hours of continuing education credit for professional logging managers and 2.5 hours for registered foresters. 🌲

Colbert and Lauderdale Counties - For a number of years Colbert and Lauderdale counties have gone together to set up a display at the North Alabama State Fair in Muscle Shoals. The theme for this year's display was Best Management Practices and the Wildland/Urban Interface. 🌲



North Region (continued)

Winston County - Over 100 people enjoyed Winston County Natural Resources Council's annual Forestry Field Day at Brushy Lake Recreation Area in the Bankhead National Forest on May 9. Assisting with the event was Alabama Cooperative Extension Systems, Bankhead National Forest, and the National Wild Turkey Federation.

The tour, which focused on Wildlife Habitat Management, included six locations featuring different forest management practices that enhance wild turkey populations.

Top right - Jeff and Joel Pounders, brothers and co-owners of Little Bear Farms, taught a very popular session, "Hunting the Eastern Wild Turkey." Chris Wright, AFC Winston County Manager, taught a session on prescribed burning and the prescribed burning services of the Alabama Forestry Commission.

Middle - Cary Cark, Assistant Fire Manager with the Bankhead National Forest, demonstrated utilization of mulcher practices implemented on USDA Forest Service property.

Bottom - Attendees gathered for door prize giveaway. Evaluation forms completed by participants at the end of the tour provided very positive feedback, as well as ideas and topics for future tours. 🍂



North Region *(continued)*

The **Winston County** Natural Resource Council recently toured Sherer Timber, located just south of Double Springs. Tim and Jessica Sherer hosted the event and explained the operation of their woodyard. Sherer Timber buys timber from mostly small loggers in the area. Different classes of timber, such as pulpwood or saw timber, are unloaded and sorted into tractor trailer loads for delivery to the appropriate mill. The Sherers also have an automated firewood mill that provides additional income during the slower season. The mill cuts and splits firewood which is then sold to individuals and re-sellers. Sold by the pound, firewood is currently priced at .03 cents per pound or \$60.00 per ton. Green hickory is sawed and sold to Greentop Barbeque, located in Jefferson County. Top right - Johnna Franks learning to use the splitter. Below - Winston County Natural Resource Council members. 🍂



Jessica Sherer hosted the group for lunch where everyone enjoyed vegetable beef soup, pinto beans, cornbread and coconut cream cake. Chris Wright, Winston County Manager, anxiously awaits the first slice of cake! 🍂



The **Madison County** Association of Volunteer Fire Departments held an Awards Day and Fallen Firefighters Memorial at Madison County High School on October 4th. Among the list of Fallen Honorees was Phillip Drake, "Madison 12" with the Alabama Forestry Commission, who passed away on November 12, 2007. Phillip's family is pictured during the ceremony. Attending from the AFC were Greg Wood, Leitha McClain, Virginia Watts, and Taylor Hamilton. 🍂





Hale County is home to two new State Champion Trees. This Eastern Cottonwood is owned by Mike Whaley (pictured) who lives near Newbern. It measures 139 inches in circumference, 109 feet in height, with a crown spread of 81 feet 🍂

The second **Hale County** champion is an American chestnut located in the Talladega National Forest, Oakmulgee Division. The tree measures 35.48 inches in circumference, 58 feet tall, with a crown spread of 32 feet. Standing with the champion American chestnut are (L to R): Wayne Ford (Cooperative Extension System), John Pirtle (AFC Northwest Regional Forester), Jeff Makemson (Alabama Game & Fish), and Cynthia Ragland (USDA Forest Service). 🍂



Northwest Region associates gave a Farewell Reception for **Rhonda Rogers** on August 10 at the Regional Office in Northport. A radio dispatcher with the Commission for 18 years at Northport, Rhonda accepted a position with the Department of Corrections. 🍂



Northwest Region (continued)

Clean-Up Day First Step toward Firewise Landscape

By Brad Lang, Tuscaloosa/Walker Work Unit Manager

The Tuscaloosa/Walker Work Unit organized a work day at the NW Regional campus (to include the regional and county offices) on Friday, September 19th. Employees from the Walker County office, Tuscaloosa County office, and the NW Regional office participated in the coordinated effort to create an aesthetically pleasing environment. Long-term goals are to re-capture the beauty that the campus once displayed as well as demonstrate how a Firewise structure should look like for educational purposes.

Limbs that had grown out of control were pruned, and dead or dying trees and shrubs were removed from overgrown areas. Over the next year, plans include replanting some shrubs and trees in desirable areas following Firewise landscape suggestions. The buildings will be re-stained to protect their outer structure integrity.

Thanks to everyone for their hard work! 🌻



Northwest Region *(continued)*



A basic wildland fire class was held in **Walker County** in June. Completing the course was Commission employee Trista Rogers, Forester in Lawrence County, along with 28 volunteers and three full-time firemen. 🌿



Below: Upon his promotion to Protection Division Director and subsequent move to Montgomery, **Dan Jackson** was honored by the **Walker County Firefighters Association** for 20 years of service. A very special cake was presented to Dan on August 12. Left: Walker County Soil and Water Conservation District also honored Dan Jackson on August 7. Dan is pictured receiving a framed historical photo from Dorman Grace, Chairman of the committee 🌿



Northwest Region (continued)



*"I want to be a fireman when I grow up!" People of all ages were involved in **Walker County's EMS Day.*** 🍂



Walker County - (Above L to R) AFC Forest Rangers Bartley Wyers and Jason Berry participated in a class in "Basic Rope Rescue" at Alabama Power's Gorgas Steam Plant, sponsored by the Boldo Fire Department. Left - Jason drops out of sight! 🍂



Remembering...

Alan Williams

February 7, 1948 - July 14, 2008

Alan Williams began his career with the Alabama Forestry Commission as a Forester II on September 13, 1987. He worked as Dallas County supervisor under the direction of District Forester Larry Brooks, attending the AFC Forestry Academy and completing the Law Enforcement Academy.

Transferring in April of 1990 to the Dadeville Office as District Four Management Specialist under the supervision of Charles Hall, he was promoted to Forester III in January of 1991. When the AFC reorganized in October of 1996, Alan transferred to the Northeast Region, Programs, under Assistant Regional Forester Sam Gravel's supervision, although continuing to work out of the Dadeville Office.

Williams was especially talented at working with landowners to help them achieve their objectives. He was excellent in motivating others and coordinating the management programs in the old Northeast Region. Alan also enjoyed working with youth, serving as an instructor for both the 4-H Forestry and Wildlife judging teams, as well as the Hunter Education Program. Extremely knowledgeable concerning forestry and wildlife issues, he was often requested to speak on both topics.

An associate with the Alabama Forestry Commission for over 20 years, Alan Williams was considered a friend by all and his death leaves a huge void. A pleasure to work with, his co-workers will miss his sunny disposition and quick wit.

Because Alan's family knew how he enjoyed his work with the Alabama Forestry Commission, they chose to have him buried in his AFC uniform. Williams is survived by his wife, Mary Anne; several step-children and step-grandchildren; his mother, Mrs. Frances Williams; sister, Gail Brendle; a niece and two nephews.

If you would like to give a memorial gift to honor Alan's memory, please make checks payable to "Tallapoosa Hunter Education" and send to: Madeline Hildreth, 2430 Ridge Road, Brewton AL 36426.

Through your gifts, Alan's favorite cause – the local hunter education course – can continue to make a difference in the lives of young outdoorsmen 🌻



Alan Williams, enjoying the sport he loved most - duck hunting.



Promotion of Landowner Awareness in Coosa County

*By Joel D. Glover, Certified Wildlife Biologist &
Wildlife Conservation Enforcement Officer*

In September, 66 Coosa County residents attended a “Landowner Awareness” program in Hanover hosted by the Coosa County Forestry Planning Committee and the Coosa County Sheriff’s Office. It was also sponsored by the Alabama Conservation Enforcement Officers Association.

The mission of the Coosa County Forestry Planning Committee is to educate and assist landowners in properly managing the natural resources on their property. This program was designed to educate landowners concerning possible problems they may face and to provide information on how to deal with these problems. Those in attendance received factual information on how to recognize a clandestine methamphetamine lab, wild land/urban interface problems, and illegal hunting activity. More importantly these landowners learned the proper steps to take when confronted with these situations or when they observe suspicious activity.

Coosa County Deputy Eddie Burke provided an informative presentation including a vast display of components used in the manufacture of methamphetamine (meth). Some in attendance were surprised to learn that meth is often produced in barns, sheds, vehicles, and even on logging roads that may occur on their property. He enlightened residents on the toxicity of meth and how the remnants, which may be found anywhere, are also toxic and may cause long-term health problems. Many were surprised to learn that a residence is virtually uninhabitable after it has been used for meth production. Burke warned landowners to be very cautious if they encounter any suspicious persons, find suspicious containers, or smell ammonia-type odors on their property. He and Sheriff Terry Wilson asked that citizens be vigilant and contact the Sheriff’s Office when they observe anything suspicious.

Burke was followed by AFC County Forester Blake Kelley who provided information concerning the wild land/urban interface and obtaining burning permits. Kelley explained that although we normally do not have fires such as those that destroy so many homes in the western US, we still should be fire wise. He stated there are many ways people living in wooded areas can protect their homes from fire. To this end, the Alabama Forestry Commission is currently conducting fire readiness evaluations for homeowners. Those interested in having their property evaluated were encouraged to contact Forest Ranger Rick Porch. Landowners were also made aware of available cost share assistance for prescribed burning through the WHIP and EQIP programs offered through the Natural Resource Conservation Service.

Next, the program focused on the upcoming hunting season. Conservation Enforcement Officers Thomas Traylor and Clint Middlebrooks discussed the ongoing problem of people removing deer fawns from the wild. They then covered the most violated hunting laws and reported that several fines have been increased for the coming season, encouraging landowners to be observant and report any illegal hunting activity.

Being a good steward requires the landowner be on the land. A major emphasis of this program was to inform landowners, make them more aware, and request their assistance in fighting illegal activity in the county. 🌿

Coosa’s Conservation Organization of the Year

By Joel D. Glover

Members of the Coosa County Forestry Planning Committee were recently awarded the Governor’s Conservation Achievement Award as the “Conservation Organization of the Year” by the Alabama Wildlife Federation. This committee is comprised of agency personnel, private natural resource consultants, and private landowners passionate about natural resource conservation. The group has aggressively pursued their mission of educating Coosa County landowners and youth concerning wise use of our natural resources. According to Committee Chairman, Wildlife Biologist Joel Glover, “This group is comprised of several can-do individuals who work well together to get the job done.”

The honor was bestowed on the group based in part on their longstanding promotion of multiple resource management through the TREASURE Forest program. Coosa currently leads all counties in the state with 105 certified TREASURE Forest Landowners. In addition, the committee regularly hosts landowner tours and informative meetings, as well as training 4-H teams and providing resources to individuals and the libraries in the county.

The Governor’s Conservation Achievement Awards are considered the most prestigious conservation awards in the state. “We are both honored and humbled to receive this recognition,” stated Glover. 🌿

Below: CCPFC members with the 2008 Conservation Organization of the Year Award: (left to right): Douglass McConnell, Sara Baldwin, Brian Walker, Blake Kelley, Joel Glover, Tom Reichert, Raymond Shaw, Andy Baril, Roger Vines, Annette Spivey, and Ericha Nix.



East Central Region (continued)



Autauga County – State Senator Wendell Mitchell and State Representative Mac Gipson presented checks to Autauga County's volunteer firefighters recently at the Pine Level Fire Department. Pictured are (front row) William Seymore and Lorri Shook; (back row L to R) AFC's Adam Ball, Mark Caffey, Senator Wendell Mitchell, Representative Mac Gipson, Kenny Barber, Wesley Pasley and Ronnie Edwards. Autauga County has ten volunteer fire departments – Autaugaville, Billingsley, Booth, Independence, Jones, Marbury, Old Kingston, Pentecost, Pine Level, and White City – each of which received \$1,922.69. 🌻



Russell County – Grant checks were awarded to Russell County VFDs on August 19 at the Russell County AFC office. Presenting the checks were Senator Ted Little (front row center,) Representative Billy Beasley (second from right) and Representative Lesley Vance (far right). County Manager David Boozer is pictured third from left. 🌻



Elmore County - Senator Preuit, Representative Greg Wren, and Representative Mac Gipson are pictured at presentation of grant checks to Elmore County fire departments on September 10. (Senator Hinton Mitchell was also present but had to leave early.) Pictured at far right: AFC's Lynn Justiss. 🌻

East Central Region (continued)

Lee County Forest Stewardship Committee – During the Summer Forestry Tour at the Mary Olive Thomas Demonstration Forest in Lee County, Caterpillar demonstrated some of their latest logging equipment for the landowners. 🌻



The **Elmore County Forestry Planning Committee** and **Elmore County TREASURE Forest Landowners Association** hold three educational meetings each year. The August meeting was held at the Elmore County AFC office with approximately 30 landowners attending. The topic was “Advances and Developments in Forestry Bio-Energy and Bio-Products.” Speakers were Beth Lawrence, Director of Development for the Auburn University, Natural Resources Management and Development Institute; and Tom Gallagher, Assistant Professor of Forestry Operations with Auburn University, Forestry and Wildlife Section. 🌻

Macon County – On September 23, the Tuskegee University Cooperative Extension Program conducted an in-service training at Tuskegee University with the theme: “Black Belt Farmers Practicing Sustainable Forestry.” Set up by Jerry Bettis (Extension Specialist) to provide information primarily to the county extension agents across the Black Belt, this program provided an excellent opportunity for the AFC to network the Forestry message with partners and landowners. Subjects covered included Forestry Incentive and Assistance Programs, with Gwen Lewis (NRCS) and Arthur Hitt (AFC), as well as Fee and Free Service Programs offered by the Alabama Forestry Commission, with Bob Montgomery and Charles Baldwin (both AFC). There was also full participation during the Question & Answer session. The group asked very good questions, demonstrating that they were obviously in touch with the landowners in their counties. According to Jerry Bettis, “Each of our agents spoke highly of the content, format, and speakers. I concur that each presentation was ‘top-of-the-line.’” 🌻





Baldwin County – Jason Barrett (Forest Ranger in Baldwin County) presenting a Wildland/Urban Interface Powerpoint presentation to 150 attendees at the Baldwin County Fire Chiefs Association monthly meeting on Aug 7th. 🍁



Monroe County - The AFC staff presented a Smokey program at Excel Daycare on September 24th 🍁



Clarke County – Representative Marc Keahey (left) presenting RCFP grant checks to Clarke County Volunteer Fire Departments at the Clarke County AFC Office in Grove Hill. Benji Elmore, Clarke County AFC Manager, is seated second from left. 🍁



Southwest Region *(continued)*

Southwest Region associates threw a "Farewell Party" for **Shirley Larkin** on August 20th at the Stagecoach Restaurant in Stockton. Shirley came on board with the AFC in 1993 where she was Radio Dispatcher in Bay Minette for 15 years. She has transferred to the Alabama Department of Corrections to work in an administrative assistant position.

Stanley Anderson, Ruth Carden, Shirley Larkin (showing off her gift from the SW Region employees: a pearl necklace & matching earrings), and Gary Cole 🌻



Western Fire Detail - Jason Gillikin (Baldwin County Forest Ranger), Ken Leslie (Mobile/Washington Work Unit Manager), and Benji Elmore (Clarke/Choctaw/Marengo Work Unit Manager) on the line fighting fires during Oregon/California trip. The crew left Alabama on July 15th and returned Aug 2nd. 🌻

“Be Ready Day” Recognizes AFC

By Ken Leslie, Mobile-Washington Counties Work Unit Manager

The Mobile County office of the Alabama Forestry Commission participated in “Be Ready Day” on September 26, which acknowledged several Emergency Response agencies within the state. This recognition program, which took place at the Mobile County Fairgrounds, was initiated to show the magnitude and diversity of agencies and organizations that respond when a disaster or emergency occurs. Governor Bob Riley, the Governor’s Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (GFBCI), and the Alabama Department of Homeland Security (ALDHS) gave their appreciation for the commitment and dedication of these agencies and personnel to the citizens of Mobile County and the State of Alabama.

The AFC displayed their firefighting equipment which included a transport and tractor unit, hand tools, pumper unit, and four-wheeler. A Wildland Urban Interface display was also set up for the public to view and receive AFC publications about hazard assessment. Commission personnel answered questions from several elementary school students as well as adults about wildfire prevention and control. AFC associates participating in the program were Stanley Anderson, Kenneth Leslie, Aaron Hunt, and Gary Stephens. 🌿



*Top: Governor Bob Riley
Center: Ken Leslie, Mobile-Washington Counties Work Unit Manager 🌿*

Right: Aaron Hunt, Forestry Specialist in Mobile County, and Stanley Anderson, Wildland Urban Interface Coordinator 🌿



Southwest Region *(continued)*



SW Region Forestry Field Day

Southwest Region Forestry Field Day held October 1 at Saloom Properties in Conecuh County. Introduction and welcome by host Dr. Salem Saloom. 🍂

AFC Baldwin County Forestry Specialist Richard Johnson acting as burn manager for the demo site. 🍂



Autauga County wins the runner-up for the state Natural Resources Council Award. 🍂

Victor Howell, AFC Conecuh County Manager, discussing the benefits of prescribed burning. 🍂



Houston County - Volunteer firefighters gathered on August 19 at the Houston County Volunteer Fire Fighters' Association in Dothan to receive their annual grant from the State of Alabama. State Senator Harri Anne Smith and members of the Alabama Forestry Commission were there to present the checks and express their appreciation for the work the departments do. Left - Senator Smith and the AFC's Todd Taggart discuss communications needs within the county. Bottom - Senator Smith and the AFC's Tracy Lawrence present the checks. 🌿



Mail Call

14 May 2008

To Linda Casey, Bill Baisden,
John Pirtle, and Walter Cartwright
Montgomery, Alabama:

I was able to attend the Forestry Field Day at Brushy Lake Recreation Area located in the Bankhead National Forest last Friday. This was an excellent example of AFC work unit cooperation as well as the best cooperation between state, federal, and county agencies that I have seen in 18 years. Not only were agencies involved but TREASURE Forest landowners, Helen Mosley winners, active consultants, retired consultants, and many others participated, making this a huge success. Those I know that were involved were the three AFC counties and their planning committees, Extension, NRCS, FSA, Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries, USDA/FS, and the Pounders Brothers. I also see evidence that folks are very aware of the MOU that has been signed with NRCS. Winston County was the driving force and should be highly commended for a job well done. I sent this to you as a means of letting you know that great things are going on knowing that you'll not be at every event.

*Jim Jeter
AFC BMP Coordinator/
Hardwood Specialist
Northport, Alabama*

14 September 2008

To Linda S. Casey
Montgomery, Alabama:

I would like to take this opportunity to personally commend one of your employees at the Alabama Forestry Commission. Long story short, after interviewing for a Ranger/Technician position in Mobile County, I discovered I was no longer on the state register, thereby making me ineligible for any future postings. Several phone calls to Paula Stinchcomb, Personnel Manager at the Alabama Forestry Commission, soon had me back on the state register.

While I am certainly grateful to have been re-instated, the absolute best part of my whole experience is how I was treated. Paula Stinchcomb was Customer Service-

oriented from the first phone call to all subsequent follow-up phone calls. She was consistently pleasant and informative as well as "always ready to go the extra mile." Her willingness to add that personal touch makes her a true team player and invaluable asset to your organization. I offer my sincerest gratitude and appreciation to your employee, Paula Stinchcomb.

*Very respectfully,
Dan Ewing
Mobile, Alabama*

19 September 2008

To Hank McKinley
Gardendale, Alabama:

I just wanted to take a minute to let you know how much I appreciate one of your employees. Although some of us have been driving transports for 15 to 20 years, we still get a little nervous knowing we are going to be "tested" on our knowledge and skills for our CDLs. Gene Lyons has worked with a lot of us to help us learn the things we didn't already know about the equipment and to get comfortable with the idea of someone evaluating our performance. Gene worked with me two different days and then took me to the testing site. He was great! Although he stood out in the hot sun for hours watching me practice the alley dock and straight-line backing, he made it clear to me that he would give me as much time as I needed. He never complained. I have heard the same thing from numerous others that Gene has helped to prepare for their tests. We need more employees like this in the Alabama Forestry Commission.

*Leitha McClain
Marshall County AFC
Guntersville, Alabama*

21 September 2008

To Steve Lamkin, Stephen May, John Pirtle, Kenneth Elmore, Walker County, Tuscaloosa County, and James Jeter Northport, Alabama:

I would like to thank John Pirtle, Steve May, Diane Harris, Ken Elmore, Brad Fite, Everette Brown, Jim Junkin, Ronnie Turner, and Jason Berry for the help Friday at the NW Regional office work day. There was a drastic improvement by the end of the day and the place has really taken shape. Everyone worked hard to get the work done by the end of the day and we still have a few things to get done but the bulk was accomplished. It is important to keep our facilities maintained and I appreciate all the help we received to make our grounds aesthetically pleasing again. You will have to join us in the days to come for the bonfire from the debris that was removed.

*Thanks again,
Brad Lang, R.F.
AFC Work Unit Manager
Tuscaloosa/Walker Counties
Northport, Alabama*

To Steve McEachron
Florence, Alabama:

I wanted to thank you for taking the time to come out and look at my trees. I know you are very busy and I really do appreciate your time. The information you provided will be very helpful as I watch these trees in the future.

Thanks again,

Gayle Holden

16 October 2008

To Gary Cole
Brewton, Alabama:

Thank you ever so much for all you did to make the Southwest Alabama Forestry Field Day Tour a success. Without your leadership, your participation, and your suggestions this would not have been such a success. It did not go unnoticed. We are so blessed to have so many people working in the commission who are service-oriented and who know what good hospitality is all about.

*Blessings,
Salem Saloom
Brewton, Alabama*

Fall 2008



A+ for Originality!

This year, folks in the Northeast Regional Office decorated their Christmas tree using Smokey Bear items! 🌿



Autauga County's David Davis and Adam Ball visit with TREASURE Forest Landowner Check Stephens and his dog Baby. Mr. Stephens, Alabama's very first Christmas Tree Farmer, donates a tree for the AFC State Office lobby every year, as well as the Governor's Mansion and other state agencies and organizations. 🌿



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